



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

News Release

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FUGITIVE SUSPECT IN GERMAN MURDER CASE ARRESTED BY ICE ***-- Arrest in New York Results from Collaboration by ICE, U.S. VISIT, & Interpol --***

BUFFALO, N.Y. -- Peter J. Smith, Special Agent-in-Charge of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in Buffalo, today announced that ICE agents at the Lewistown, NY, Port of Entry have arrested an international fugitive wanted for murder in Germany. The arrest is based on information provided by Interpol and analyzed by ICE in Washington, D.C.

Late Sunday afternoon, ICE agents arrested 28 year-old David Kricheli, (dob 9/19/76) a native of the Republic of Georgia, as he attempted to enter the United States from Canada at the Lewiston Port of Entry. Kricheli is wanted for murder and attempted murder in connection with a 1997 shooting incident in Lemgo, Germany, in which one individual was killed and another wounded. Kricheli is wanted by Interpol and the subject of an Interpol "Red Notice."

At the time of his arrest, Kricheli was using the alias Michael Tonia and purporting to be a Canadian citizen born on 12/31/78. ICE agents have learned that for the past several years, Kricheli has utilized this identity to enter the United States as a commercial truck driver. He was working as a truck driver when he was arrested.

The investigation began last month when ICE's Compliance Enforcement Unit (CEU) in Washington, D.C. received several thousand fingerprints from Interpol relating to international fugitives and convicted criminals. The CEU immediately began cross-referencing the Interpol fingerprints against the fingerprints and other biometric data contained in Homeland Security's U.S. Visitor and Immigrant Status Indicator Technology (US-VISIT) program. US-VISIT collects travel information and biometric identifiers such as fingerprints to verify the identity of visitors upon their arrival and departure.

ICE agents in Washington quickly found that an Interpol fingerprint of Kricheli was a direct match for the fingerprint of a man in Canada named Michael Tonia. The investigation also showed that, in January of 2004, Tonia had applied for a non-immigrant visa at the United States Embassy in Ottawa. Further research indicated that Tonia was employed as truck driver in Canada and routinely drove into the United States as part of his employment. ICE agents quickly confirmed that Kricheli and Tonia were one and the same individual and that Kricheli had been using this alias for years to mask his identity.

On May 6, 2005, ICE's CEU in Washington, D.C., notified ICE agents in Buffalo that the wanted individual was operating in their area. Buffalo agents placed a lookout into Homeland Security border databases indicating the subject should be detained for further investigation if encountered. Two days later, Kricheli was arrested.

According to ICE Special Agent-in-Charge Smith: "This is an example of outstanding international cooperation between Interpol and ICE which led to the arrest of a dangerous murder suspect who used fraud and fraudulent documents to enter the United States. Quick action by ICE agents in Washington, D.C. and Buffalo and cooperation from Customs and Border Protection officers at the Lewiston Bridge finally ended this man's fugitive career."

At his initial appearance in United States District Court in Buffalo this afternoon, Kricheli was charged in a criminal complaint with Making False Statements to Federal Officer, a violation of 18 USC Section 1001. He was also charged with Visa Fraud, a violation of 18 USC Section 1546. U.S. Magistrate H. Kenneth Schroeder, Jr. entered a plea of not guilty for Kricheli. He was ordered detained pending a detention hearing on Monday, May 16, 2005.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.